Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2014
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #1635 08/29/14

~ Facebook Click Bait Rule ~ People Are Talking! ~ Area-51 Makeover!
~ Kinect Being Abandoned? ~ OS X Yosemite Preview! ~ USIS Data in Breach!
~ Delete All Your Tweets! ~ New Nintendo 3DS Models ~ TWC Suffering Outage!

~ MSN Messenger Is Ending! ~ ~ "Amiibo" Launching!

-* How Atari Arcade Changed Game *-
-* Atari 'Destroyed' by Sale to Warner *-
-* Sony Is Hit by Cyber Attack, Bomb Threat! *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, this weekend marks the unofficial demise of another summer season, ending with the Labor Day holiday on Monday. It's hard to believe that we're almost into the month of September already!

So, it's time to start getting prepared for a weekend of barbecues, and a few cold ones! Hopefully, your plans are similar! Just try to remember to drive safely and stay sover behind the wheel!

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

Atari "Destroyed" by Sale to Warner, Says Founder

Atari's decision to sell to Warner Communications in 1976 was a mistake that cost the iconic Pong company almost everything, according to founder Nolan Bushnell. During a recent Reddit AMA, Bushnell said the biggest lesson he learned at Atari was to never sell to "big Hollywood studios." This sale almost immediately marked the end of Atari, he said.

"Atari had an extraordinary corporate culture that was destroyed within two years of the sale," Bushnell said. "I think that Atari would still be important today if that sale hadn't occurred."

Atari lives on today, but only as a shell of its former self, having undergone numerous splits and acquisitions. The current version of Atari is still involved in games, having recently announced Roller Coaster Tycoon World and reboots of Alone in the Dark and Haunted House for PC.

Bushnell's Reddit AMA also reveals some other interesting highlights about his personal life and career. First, he says that it is indeed true that he had a beer tap in his office at Atari, Chuck E. Cheese's, and every other company he has ever run. Bushnell also points out that the rights to his image and likeness were optioned by Leonardo DiCaprio, and reiterates that a movie about his life is currently in development. Though Bushnell says he thinks DiCaprio would do a fine job bringing

him to life on screen, he would also be happy if Liam Neeson got the job.

It has also been reported that Apple co-founder founder Steve Jobs in 1976 approached Bushnell and asked if he would invest $50,000 in the company in exchange for a one-third stake. He declined the offer at the time. As you might, he now wishes he hadn’t. "I regret it. :(" he said.

Finally, Bushnell offered a prediction for where the future of technology might go. "I think that robots and entertainment will be very important in the future," he said. "I’m also very interested in businesses that will be enabled by autonomous or auto-drive cars. There will also be an interesting intersection between computers and biology. Harder tech, but important, is nanotech, i.e. micromachines."

Most recently, Atari CEO Frederic Chesnais said in May that the company wants to get back into hardware, but not with a console.

How Atari Arcade Changed The Game

When Matthew Labunka heard that Microsoft wanted to collaborate with Atari on a project to bring classic games to the Web, his first thought was, Uh oh, what do we do now?

That s because, as senior producer at Atari, Labunka was in charge of figuring out what the big idea for the partnership should be. However, what started as an uh-oh moment quickly evolved into a groundbreaking project in the world of online gaming.

One of the original ideas was to put Atari s 150 games online in an arcade. That idea became more ambitious as users added their own games, making the project open source. Eventually, that project was developed in HTML5.

 We were doing so many innovative things with this that pretty much every day we were faced with questions like, Well, how do we do that? Labunka said.

Atari Arcade was a huge hit and won the Webby People s Voice Award this year for Best Game Website. While accepting the Webby in May, Labunka used an extra word to deliver this five-word speech: Here s to dreaming, innovating and playing.

While accepting a Webby for Atari Arcade in May, Matthew Labunka added an extra word to his five-word speech: Here s to dreaming, innovating and playing.

Labunka said that the success of Atari Arcade is thanks to his whole team and his counterpart at Microsoft, Justin Garrett: It was a huge collaborative project. I was just one little piece in the big cog of it.

He hopes to see more advances in technologies in the next 25 years on the Web that help people across the globe work face to face. With more companies using remote workers, the most pressing technological need seems to be clear: advanced videoconferencing tools.

 What is the next videoconference? Labunka mused. Is that virtual

reality? I don t know. We ll see.

Hailed as the Internet s highest honor by The New York Times, The Webby Awards is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet, including Websites, Interactive Advertising & Media, Online Film & Video, Mobile & Apps, and Social.

Established in 1996, The Webby Awards received 12,000 entries from all 50 states and more than 60 countries worldwide this year. The Webby Awards is presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS). Sponsors and partners of The Webby Awards include Dell, Microsoft, Vitamin T, Leica, MailChimp, Engine Yard, Funny or Die, Advertising Age, Percolate, BuzzFeed, Mashable, HLN, Business Insider, Internet Week New York and Guardian News and Media.

=~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sony Hit by Cyber Attack, Bomb Threat!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Is Microsoft Abandoning Kinect?
                                  Nintendo Launching 'Amiibo'!
                                  And much more!

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Japan's Sony Hit by Cyber Attack, Bomb Threat

Japanese entertainment giant Sony said Monday its online music and gaming sites came under a cyber attack by a hacker group that also claimed there were explosives on a plane carrying a senior company executive.

The company said a US commercial aircraft carrying the president of Sony Online Entertainment had to be diverted after a warning online about the explosives.

"The PlayStation Network and Sony Entertainment Network have been impacted by an attempt to overwhelm our network with artificially high traffic," the company said on its PlayStation.Blog, adding that "no personal information has been accessed".

A spokeswoman for Sony in Tokyo said a person or group using the Twitter name @LizardSquad had claimed responsibility for the attack.

"Today we planted the ISIS flag on @Sony's servers," @LizardSquad tweeted said with a photo of a man carrying the Islamic State flag.

The feed also contained reference to a bomb on a plane.

Separately, John Smedley, president of Sony Online Entertainment, said on his micro-blog: "Yes. My plane was diverted. Not going to discuss more than that. Justice will find these guys."

The American Airlines plane, bound for San Diego from Dallas, was redirected to Phoenix, according to the company.

More than 150 million accounts were registered with Sony Entertainment Network as of September last year, the company said.

Is Microsoft Abandoning Kinect?

Wave goodbye to motion controls.

Microsoft s motion-tracking Kinect 2.0 sensor was supposed to be what differentiated the Xbox One from the competition. It was more than just a way to talk directly to your console: It was a tool designed to transform the game machine into a social and media hub, the tip of the spear in Microsoft s fight to take over your living room. More than anything, it was supposed to be way, way better than the first Kinect.

Today, though, it seems little more than an afterthought.

The decision to decouple Kinect from the Xbox One in May was surprising only in that it took the company a good year to do so. We certainly saw this coming: The company spent most of 2013 backtracking on its initial stance that the Xbox One couldn t exist without Kinect. That simply wasn t the case.

Unbundling Kinect also made sense on paper, allowing Microsoft to lower the price of the system to better compete with the PlayStation 4. But since that move, the company has had very little to say about its once-heralded accessory. And while Kinect is still very much available, the ongoing silence has many people wondering if Microsoft is essentially walking away from the device.

At its recent press conference before the gamescom show in Germany, for instance, Kinect wasn t mentioned at all. At E3 2014 in June, it was mentioned in a quick announcement about a new Dance Central game but otherwise flew under the radar.

Microsoft, not surprisingly, has downplayed talk that it s de-emphasizing Kinect.

That wasn t, in any way, to make any editorial statement about the future of Kinect, Phil Harrison, corporate VP at Microsoft, told IGN after the gamescom press event. It s just that these were the games we wanted to highlight in our briefing. The games that we focused on in our briefing were the blockbusters and exclusives for this holiday, 2014.

Harrison s follow-up comment, though, was more telling.

We let the developers choose whether they want to use Kinect, he said. It s one of the tools that they have in their tool belt for taking advantage of the Xbox One, and we hope they continue to do so.

Punting the decision to use Kinect over to publishers is a graceful way for Microsoft to take a hands-off approach to its fate. That s because developers have no real incentive to use the controller, given that creating a Kinect-less game gives game makers 10 percent more graphical processing power to tap into. The development system update that followed the Kinect decoupling, in fact, let game maker Bungie increase the resolution of the Xbox One version of Destiny.

Even Microsoft s most notable in-house Kinect developer, legendary game company Rare, is stepping away.

Four years ago, then-Rare studio head Scott Henson announced the company s allegiance to the peripheral, saying, Kinect will be the main focus for Rare going forwards as it s a very rich canvas. This is just the beginning of an experience that will touch millions of people.

At gamescom, though, Xbox studio head Phil Spencer, in discussing what s next for Rare, downplayed the relationship.

 I don t want the Rare brand to mean Kinect Sports, he said.

Kinect hasn t been completely buried. In a prominent television campaign, actor Aaron Paul showcases its features (inadvertently turning on existing Xbox Ones around the country).

However, when that ad comes to the all-important price screen, the $399 non-Kinect version of the Xbox One is shown, presumably the version people will seek out at retail.

And Kinect games? There are only a handful in the pipeline right now: Disney Fantasia and Dance Central Spotlight from Harmonix, Shape Up and Just Dance 2015 from Ubisoft, Fruit Ninja Kinect 2 from Halfbrick Studios, and the clever puzzle-platformer FRU from indie outfit Thought Games.

That s a pretty meager crop, and at least one major publisher isn t exactly gearing up for more.

 It depends which hat I put on, said Ubisoft CEO Yves Guillemot, when asked for his thoughts about Microsoft downplaying Kinect at E3 this year. When I put on the casual hat, it s not good, for sure. We have less families with a camera. So it s more difficult for [Ubisoft] to do content for families. [However,] when I put my gamer hat on, it makes sense.

Without a significant slate of upcoming games to help promote it, Kinect in its current form seems destined for the bargain bin. It might not be dead yet, but it isn t moving much.

New Nintendo 3DS Models Sport NFC and Extra Buttons

During a Japanese Nintendo Direct video briefing Friday, Nintendo announced updates to its 3DS and 3DS XL devices. The new models, which have been announced only for Japan, feature an additional directional button and built-in NFC support. They launch in Japan on October 11.

The new models feature an analogue "nub" over the existing A,B, X, and Y buttons. In addition, there are new shoulder buttons - ZR and ZL - featured on top of the system, right next to the current L and R buttons.

The new 3DS models also feature a stronger CPU than existing models, which should allow for zippier downloads and browsing from the eShop, among other things. There is also built-in NFC support for Nintendo's upcoming Amiibo toy line. Nintendo will also sell an NFC adapter for existing models.

Finally, the new 3DS units are built to support custom covers, which will allow you to customize your system however you see fit.

The new 3DS will sell for 16,000 yen ($154) and the new 3DS XL will go for 18,800 yen ($180). There is no word yet on any launch outside Japan.

Nintendo Launching 'Amiibo' With 12 Characters

Pikachu and Link will be among the first characters coming to "amiibo."

Nintendo announced Friday that 12 characters will initially be part of its upcoming toy-game franchise set for release later this year. In addition to the "Pokemon" and "Legend of Zelda" leading men, the starting line-up will include Mario, Princess Peach, Yoshi, Donkey Kong, Samus Aran, Kirby, Fox McCloud, Marth, the "Wii Fit" Trainer and the Villager from "Animal Crossing."

The figures in the "amiibo" toy-game line will each cost $12.99 and work in tandem with several of the Japanese gaming giant's upcoming titles, beginning with "Super Smash Bros."

"We wanted to make sure that the breadth of characters we had for the initial 'amiibo' line-up supported the fan favorites, as well as showcase the variety of people Nintendo speaks to from kids to adults," Nintendo of America President Reggie Fils-Aime said in an interview. "For example, you've got a character like Marth from the 'Fire Emblem' series. We thought exposing Marth to a wider collection of consumers through 'amiibo' made a ton of sense, but, of course, we had to have Mario, Princess Peach and Donkey Kong in that initial line-up, as well."

Similar to Activision's "Skylanders" and "Disney Infinity," the characters' virtual histories will be stored on the plastic figures and transmitted through the Wii U GamePad, the controller for the Wii U console that features a touchscreen and near field communication (NFC) capabilities. Unlike the Activision Blizzard Inc. and Walt Disney Co. franchises, the "amiibo" figures will work with several games from different genres and won't be required to play the games.

"Our vision is to have these 'amiibo' figures be your playable friends that allow you to enhance the overall experience," said Fils-Aime. "It's a different approach from Activision and Disney, which is more to unlock something in the game. You're going to want to have your 'amiibo' figure because it's going to allow you to enhance your skills, upgrade your character and take the experience over to a friend's house."

Nintendo first unveiled "amiibo" at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in June. The company plans to release more figures over the next year and

include "amiibo" functionality in future games, as well as compatibility with its handheld Nintendo 3DS system.

The Kyoto, Japan-based company is hoping the figurines will help boost its bottom line and sales of its beleaguered Wii U console, which has been on the rise since the May release of "Mario Kart 8." Despite the success of the latest installment in the cartoony Nintendo racing series, Wii U sales still trail behind the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One consoles from rivals Sony Corp. and Microsoft Corp.

"Call of Duty" and "Assassin's Creed" publishers Activision and Ubisoft Entertainment recently said they wouldn't bring the new installments of those popular series to the Wii U later this year.

"In the end, I want the very best of every single publisher's content on our platform," said Fils-Aime. "We believe we'll get there as we grow the install base of the system. Make no mistake: The consumer knows they can get high-quality games on the Wii U console. That's why our business is up almost double over last year."

Nintendo will be showing off upcoming games like "Super Smash Bros.," "Hyrule Warriors" and "Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker" at PAX Prime, a four-day celebration of gaming that kicks off Friday in Seattle.

Alienware Area-51 Gaming PC Gets Unusual Makeover

It's been quite some time since we've seen an Area-51 system from Alienware. The desktop PC's aesthetic was fairly unique for its time a little alien head on the front, top vents that gave the appearance of scales, and slightly curved design. Well, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Alienware has announced that the Area-51 is coming back to Earth. Only, this time, it looks absolutely nothing like its predecessor.

First up, Alienware has designed the system not as a traditional rectangle, but as a triple-bay hexagon of sorts. The "triad chassis," as the company calls it, focuses on cooling efficiently and ergonomics above all.

"It features an angled, easily accessible front I/O panel and hassle-free grips that make it simple to pivot your system forward to reach rear ports. Vast and open entryways on each side are designed to provide an easy way for you to perform upgrades, brainstorm new mods, or show off your rig," reads Alienware's description.

As for the system's specs, they'll be configurable to a gamer's needs and, yes, we're assuming that those interested in a little digital shoot-shoot or stab-stab will be the ones opting for this system. The Area-51 will run Intel Haswell-E processors (including six- or eight-core variants), up to 32GB of 2133 DDR4 memory, and will support up to three graphics cards from either Nvidia or AMD.

As for storage, the Area-51 will come with bays for up to three conventional hard drives and two solid state drives. Wireless-ac is built into the system by default, and you can even install an optional 1.5-kilowatt power supply to fuel all your components.

Each Area-51 system will also be overclocked and liquid cooled, which gives speedy performance and a lovely aesthetic for those purchasing system.

Alienware's "Command Center 4.0" will allow purchasers to tinker with the system's LED lighting (across "nine independent programmable lighting zones") or allow games to do it for you via Alienware's "AlienFX API."

This is also where gamers can muck with Alienware's overclocking and view performance graphs for their system's CPU, memory, networking, and graphics cards.

The Area-51 will start shipping in the U.S. in October, with a global launch to follow. Alienware did not release pricing details.

=~=~=~=

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Undercover Investigators Among Those Exposed in Data Breach

A cyber attack at a firm that performs background checks for U.S. government employees compromised data of at least 25,000 workers, including some undercover investigators, and that number could rise, agency officials said on Friday.

The breach at Falls Church, Virginia-based US Investigations Services (USIS) exposed highly personal information of workers at the Department of Homeland Security's headquarters as well as its U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection units, two officials familiar with the investigation into the breach told Reuters.

Some employees have already received letters warning them about the breach that say compromised information includes Social Security numbers, education and criminal history, birth dates along with information about spouses, other relatives and friends including their names and addresses.

"Records including this data were exposed to unauthorized users during the cybersecurity intrusion," according to a notification letter obtained by Reuters. "We do not yet know whether the data was actually taken."

One DHS official told Reuters the agency has identified some 25,000 employees whose information it believes were exposed in the breach.

"More could be notified in coming weeks as we learn more about the breach," said the official, who asked not to be identified by name.

The company disclosed the attack earlier this month, but did not say how

many records had been compromised or which agencies were affected. It did say the intrusion has "all the markings of a state-sponsored attack."

While the number of employees affected is relatively small compared to breaches at retailers such as Target Corp, which have affected tens of millions of customers, security experts say the attack on USIS is nonetheless quite serious.

Files on background checks contain highly sensitive data that foreign intelligence agencies could attempt to exploit to intimidate government workers with access to classified information.

"They would be collecting this data to identify individuals who might be vulnerable to extortion and recruitment," said Dmitri Alperovitch, chief technology officer with cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, which sells intelligence on state-sponsored cyber attacks.

The Department of Homeland Security has suspended all work with USIS since the breach was disclosed and the FBI launched an investigation.

USIS says it is the biggest commercial provider of background investigations to the federal government, with over 5,700 employees, and provides services in all U.S. states and territories, as well as abroad.

Officials with USIS, which is a division of Altegrity Inc, could not immediately be reached for comment.

A spokeswoman for Altegrity, which is majority owned by Providence Equity Partners, declined to comment.

Time Warner Cable Is Suffering A Massive Nationwide Service Outage

Apparently tired of seeing Comcast hog all the bad publicity this past month, would-be merger partner Time Warner Cable has leapt back into the spotlight by delivering a nationwide Internet service outage. As Business Insider reports, TWC customers are complaining that their Internet service is down from coast to coast and an outage map posted on Twitter seems to show that this outage affects just about every customer in TWC s footprint.

To make matters worse, TWC s website is completely down as well and phone calls to the company are yielding nothing but busy signals. There s been no word yet on what s causing the outage or when you can expect it to get fixed but we ll be sure to post details from the company when we get them.

And if you re a frustrated TWC customer, don t worry all of these kinds of problems will be fixed once TWC merges with Comcast, which has an absolutely stellar track record when it comes to customer service.

Facebook s New Click Bait Rule Will Totally Blow You Away

Uh-oh, it s a bad Monday for Upworthy and other so-called viral sites.

Facebook today announced that it s doubling down on articles with headlines that scream for your clicks.

As of today, the world s biggest online social network is introducing two updates aimed at helping clean up News Feeds: cracking down on click-bait headlines and encouraging the sharing of articles as links instead of as photo captions.

Let s break this down.

On the click bait front, Facebook defines those as when a publisher posts a link with a headline that encourages people to click to see more without telling them much information about what they will see. Facebook says that based on its survey, while links with these headlines get a lot of clicks, 80 percent of its users say they prefer more informative headlines. These posts also tend to crowd people s News Feeds and drown out other content.

Where it gets really interesting, and possibly a little creepy, is how Facebook determines what links fall into this category. It will look at the ratio of people clicking on the content compared to people discussing and sharing it with their friends, operating under the idea that low engagement (likes, comments, shares) relative to the click signals click bait.

But Facebook will also look at the amount of time spent away from Facebook while you re presumably reading an article. The idea here is that if you click on an article and are taken to that webpage (i.e. navigating out of Facebook), and spend very little time there before coming back, you didn t find anything of substance there this is likely click bait. Essentially, Facebook will now look at your bounce rate from these stories.

Now, this could mean that Facebook is tracking you while you re outside its site. In June, Facebook announced that it was rolling out in the U.S. tracking of your websites and apps to better target the ads you see, although you can opt out of this. So it s likely that if you click on a link and disappear for 23 seconds, it will probably know that you browsed around during that time and really didn t spend much time on the original link you clicked on. However, you could also find an interesting post and send it to your Pocket or Instapaper account and return to Facebook within seconds, effectively countering the bounce rate approach.

But still, that s pretty ingenious on Facebook s part to look at bounce rates as one way to figure out the quality of links, even if it s somewhat imperfect.

The other adjustment Facebook is making is to give better ranking to links that are posted in the link format (when you copy-and-paste a link into the text box) as compared to links that are in photo captions. The rationale for this is that when you share in the link format, Facebook grabs not only the article s image, headline, and link but also some additional information about the article, such as its first line, making it more informational for the reader.

What s also interesting is that Facebook says that its studies have shown that link format posts receive twice as many clicks as links embedded in photo captions, yet other studies have found that images get the highest engagement. The discrepancy here could be that Facebook is

measuring interactions with the link while other studies are looking at the interactions with the post overall, but this is still important for marketers and social media managers responsible for brand pages to note.

These updates are pretty timely. Wired s Mat Honan ran an experiment two weeks ago during which he liked everything in his feed for two days, which resulted in his feed being entirely covered in brand and publisher content. We ve also previously written about Facebook s News Feed losing its original purpose of keeping people updated on their friends lives and drowning them in brand and paid content.

Bye Bye, Birdie: How To Delete All Your Tweets in an Instant

Have you ever, in a moment of self-reflection, realized that you regret every tweet you ve ever sent?

It s OK. As long as your poorly tasted posts didn t immediately damage your employability, you can fix things quickly with no harm done. The solution comes in one of several Twitter services that will purge your entire timeline or just old parts of it in one fell swoop, meaning that you can erase the painful past without actually having to manually thumb through your 140-character drivel yourself.

Tweet Delete handles this task quickly, and even gives the option to schedule regular tweet cleans, auto-erasing anything older than a year, a week, or some other time frame of your choosing in between the two. All you have to do is navigate to the free service s webpage, sign in with your Twitter credentials, and then select how much purging you want to do (Twitter limits the zapping of tweets to 3,200 at once).

Feel that? That s the spring-fresh sensation of a new beginning.

Other sites that provide similar Twitter-cleaning services include Tweet Deleter, TwitWipe, and Delete All My Tweets. On the app side of things, Tweeticide (iPhone) and DLTTR (Android) will help you scrub your account clean from on-the-go status, assuming that your account contains fewer than 3,200 tweets, of course.

Now, the freshest of starts on Twitter would include deleting your account altogether and starting from scratch with a new handle (though you have to make sure you really want to give up @DudeBroMan420 for good). Chucking your old account forces you to begin anew with both followers and the accounts you follow, however.

And if it s the case that you re constantly shaming yourself, deleting tweets, and shaming yourself again, then maybe Twitter is not for you. Otherwise, just try one of the cleansing services above. And maybe think before you tweet next time, @DudeBroMan420.

OS X Yosemite Preview: 5 Features To Get Excited About

Apple iMacs and MacBooks are set to get a big upgrade in the coming months in the form of a new operating system. OS X Yosemite, the follow-up to OS X Mavericks, is a massive update to Apple s operating

system that not only gives the software a new, more attractive design, but also adds a boatload of features.

The update, which will be available for free when it launches later this fall, also blurs some of the lines between Apple s desktop OS and its iOS mobile operating system though not nearly as much as Microsoft s Windows 8, which can switch from a desktop-based to a tablet-friendly interface on the same computer.

You ll even be able to make phone calls from your Mac with your connected iPhone.

There are a lot of great additions to Yosemite, but a handful of the operating system s features stand out. These are the top five features of OS X Yosemite (so far):

1. Improved design. Apple s mobile operating system, iOS 7, was a major departure from previous versions in terms of design. Apple is adopting some of these design cues into this new desktop operating system.

Icons in the dock at the bottom of the home screen have a leaner, less three-dimensional design, similar to those found in iOS 7. Even the Share button in Safari looks the same as iOS 7 s Share button. The operating system also has a new, crisper typeface that s easier to read.

A big part of Yosemite s new design is its translucent window effect. The feature gives everything, from the Dock to Finder windows to Safari s command bar, a kind of frosted-glass look that s somewhat reminiscent of the Aero design found in Windows Vista and Windows 7.

2. Notification Center. The Notification Center in the current version of the OS, Mavericks, doesn t offer much in the way of functionality beyond providing you with recent message and iTunes updates. But that s all changing with OS X Yosemite and its new Today view.

Accessible through the Notification Center, Today provides you with customizable widgets including a summary of today s and tomorrow s events, current weather conditions, your calendar, stocks, and the ability to post to social networks.

A few of Today s features were previously available in OS X Mavericks dashboard, but Apple brought them over to Today to make them more easily accessible. And if Today looks familiar, it s because it s a dead ringer for iOS s Notification Center.

Once Yosemite is available for download, Apple says, more Today view widgets will be available, too, further improving the usefulness of the Notification Center.

3. Spotlight search.?OS X s Spotlight search also gets a considerable upgrade with Yosemite. In previous versions of OS X, Spotlight was capable of performing only local searches of your computer. With Yosemite, however, Spotlight can search not only your Mac, but the Web as well.

If, for example, you search for a movie like Guardians of the Galaxy, a Spotlight search will provide you with showtimes for the movie at nearby theaters, a plot summary, trailers, the cast and crew, and even its score on Rotten Tomatoes.

Search for a contact s name, and Spotlight will automatically populate with the person s information, including her phone number and email address.

Want a bite to eat? Type in your favorite food, and Spotlight will pull up the names and locations of nearby restaurants. You can also look for things like famous public figures: Spotlight will pull up a Wikipedia entry with information on them.

Microsoft s Windows 8.1 offers a similar feature called Smart Search. It looks like Yosemite s version will be easier to use.

4. iCloud Drive.?Apple s cloud storage service, iCloud has long taken a backseat to the likes of Dropbox and Google Drive. They are easy to use and make sharing a snap, too. With Yosemite, though, iCloud may become your cloud drive of choice. That s because Apple is finally treating iCloud like a normal storage drive.

You can now access your iCloud Drive through OS X s Finder, just like you work with your local drive. You can even organize the drive any way you want and create new subfolders that are accessible through other iCloud Drive-compatible devices. So you can save your photos, videos, and any other files on your MacBook and open them on your iMac at the office.

5. Mail.?OS X s Mail has gotten some serious enhancements with Yosemite, too. The app s new Markup tool lets you annotate and edit images and text within Mail without forcing you to open a new program. You can, for example, add highlights and shapes to photos and even sign documents using your MacBook s touchpad.

That s not all, though. Mail also makes it easier to send large files with its new Mail Drop feature. Mail Drop works by making your sent files accessible to your recipients via their iCloud accounts. If they don t use iCloud, then Mail Drop will send them a link where they can download the sent files.

It s a simple addition but one that will likely prove useful to people sending groups of images or videos.

Bonus feature we re really waiting for: iOS 8 continuity?One of the biggest draws of OS X Yosemite will be its interoperability with Apple s upcoming mobile operating system, iOS 8. Rather than existing in two separate worlds, the two operating systems will be able to talk to each other, letting you do things like make and receive phone calls, and send texts, from your Mac through your iPhone.

Working on a Pages document on your Mac? If your iPad or iPhone is nearby, you can pick up where you left off on your mobile device. You can do the same thing with Mail, Safari, Messages, Maps, and other OS X apps.

Using your iPhone as a WiFi hotspot will also be easier with Yosemite. If your wireless data plan lets you use your iPhone as a hotspot, then your Mac will automatically detect that your handset is nearby and treat it like any other hotspot.

OS X Yosemite will be out later this fall as a free upgrade. It will run on Most Macs and MacBooks dating as far back as 2009 and some iMacs from 2007. Check Apple s website for further compatibility details.

TTYL: Microsoft s MSN Messenger To Shut Down After 15 Years

Microsoft s MSN Messenger, or Windows Live Messenger as it s now known, will be fully retired on Oct. 31. The software maker originally announced its plans to shift users over to Skype last year, but Microsoft kept the service running in China. After Oct. 31, Chinese Messenger users will need to use Skype, bringing an end to 15 years of the service.

MSN Messenger started off life in 1999 as a rival to AOL s AIM service. Both companies battled over chat dominance, and Microsoft engineers reverse-engineered AOL s chat protocol to allow MSN Messenger to sign into AIM, a process that AOL wasn t happy with when Microsoft first released its instant messaging client. Over the years Microsoft added various features, including custom emoticons, the ability to play Minesweeper with friends, a nudge feature that would shake a friend s chat window, and the super annoying winks option to send friends giant animated emoticons.

Microsoft has typically celebrated its MSN Messenger milestones with big green mascot outfits, but the 15-year mark and the end of the Messenger era is departing quietly. Farewell, MSN Messenger.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.